

# **Candy Man Tom Smith**

## **Lehi Yesteryears**

### **By Richard Van Wagoner**

Englishman Thomas Smith, convert to Mormonism in his native Saffordshire, arrived in Lehi in 1878 to prepare a home for his family. After visiting with his mother, who then lived in the town, Smith purchased property and returned to England. During his absence his mother died and it was 1884 before he could immigrate with his family. When he arrived in Lehi, he was shocked to see men on the street wearing clothes he had left in a trunk at his mothers. He also discovered that he had lost his Lehi property and was now homeless.

Fortunately, John Woodhouse took the family in. Although Smith eventually obtained other property, he forever after carried a grudge against the LDS Church, holding local Mormons responsible for his property loss. This rather, hostile stance, and the fact that he renounced his church membership, resulted in the failure of his local candy business. On his arrival in town he had leased a building at approximately 158 West Main (where the Lehi Country Bakery is today) and began selling confections.

Lehi was a rather closed society in the late 1880's. Federal officials were frequently raiding the town looking for polygamists. Non-mormons, particularly ex-Mormons like Thomas Smith, were viewed as "spotter" and treated like pariahs. A local committee with petition in hand approached Smith and advised him that unless he rejoined the LDS Church the signers would boycott his store. Objecting to the intimidation, Smith refused the request and his business dwindled drastically. Undaunted, he closed his Main Street shop and moved his

operations to his home. He soon began to peddle his wares in neighboring towns, where he became affectionately known as “Candy Tom”.

Candy Tom’s factory was well-remembered by his granddaughter Ora Putnam. “Grandpa Smith’s bake room, where he made his goods to peddle, was the north part of the house at 411 West 100 South (still standing in 1993). All around the room were big brick ovens. Huge hooks were on the wall and these were what he used to make his taffy. Nobody could swing taffy like Grandpa Smith”.

Smith owned a horse named Charlie which pulled his wagon all of his travels to such faraway places as St. John, Faust, Vernon, Clover, Ajax, and Lookout Pass. Old Charlie was as much a lover of good taffy as Candy Tom’s customers. The clever animal, when he could smell the candy cooking, would come to the bake-room window and poke his head in. If this did not result in a sweet reward he would walk around to the door, grab the knob in his teeth, and rattle the door until it was opened and he received a piece of chewy taffy.

Around the turn of the century when the fact that he was not a Mormon did not seem as important to townspeople--Smith opened another candy store in a large barn just west of his home (still standing today). The lower adobe part of the building was painted black and the top section was lumber. Ora Putnam remembered several kinds of taffy, “the kind that is very brittle, and a soft chewy kind and then there was a kind we all loved, which was sort of powdery.” Virgil Peterson preferred the all-day suckers. E.N. Webb’s favorite was Lucky Balls--hard taffy, which sometimes contained a hidden nickel. Candy Tom provided a hammer for kids to break open their piece of candy. “If he had a lucky streak”, Webb wrote, “he would buy another “Lucky Ball” with the nickel he won.

I never knew Candy Tom. He was only a memory long before my time. But his story, like many early Lehi citizens, is a tale worth telling.